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ABSTRACT

A study was performed to investigate the psychosocial characteristics of adult basic education (ABE) and adult secondary education (ASE) students and the extent to which these concerns are affected by educational experiences. Several research questions were formulated; for example, what proportion of ABE/ASE students have a "favorable ratio" of positive aspects of an ego-stage crisis over the negative aspects? Seventy-two volunteer ABE/ASE students, aged sixteen to seventy, were given a self-description questionnaire to determine their perceptions of their psychosocial characteristics. Also, an educational experience questionnaire was administered to determine the extent to which students believed their educational programs helped them deal positively or negatively with their concerns for trust, autonomy, initiative, and/or industry. The proportion of mistrusting students in the sample was greater than the proportion of trusting students; but the proportion having high pertinent concerns for trust was greater than the proportion having low pertinent concerns for trust. ABE/ASE students viewing themselves as having a sense of positive autonomy was greater than the proportion viewing themselves as having a sense of shame and doubt. It appears from another finding of this research that ABE/ASE programs are generally doing well in promoting positive psychosocial development and in controlling negative influences. (CSS)

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A.B.E/A.S.E. STUDENTS

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Introduction

This paper reports the findings of a research project that was conducted during the Spring of 1978. The study investigated the psychosocial characteristics of adult basic education (ABE) and adult secondary education (ASE) students and the extent to which these concerns are affected by educational experiences.

Much of the literature on the psychological and sociological characteristics of ABE and ASE students (Anderson and Niemi, 1969; Hastings, 1968; Kavale and Lindsey, 1977) suggested that many are "mistrusting," "dependent," "lack initiative," and "lacking in self confidence." Although the terms and concepts used by these authors were not grounded in a common point of reference, or based on in-depth empirical research, their research findings painted a negative portrait of ABE and ASE students. The present study provided a "test" of the literature to determine if the psychosocial characteristics of ABE and ASE students, when investigated from an in-depth psychological framework, are similar to the descriptions which were prevalent in the literature.

The literature concerning the classroom environment of ABE and ASE classes (Mezirow et al., 1975; Kreitlow, 1972; Flaherty, 1970) suggested that teachers who maintain high student enrollments tend to develop trusting, friendly relationships with students. In a general sense, this study asked, "Are such concerns <u>really</u> important to ABE and ASE students?" and "Does the educational experiences of ABE and ASE programs facilitate such concerns?"

The terms ABE and ASE were used in this study to describe students who were enrolled in literacy programs for the purposes of increasing their competence in reading, writing, computing, pursuing career goals, developing coping skills and/or obtaining general education development (GED) diplomas. ABE students were those students who were enrolled in grade levels 1 through 8. ASE students were those enrolled in grades equivalent to 9 through 12.

Research Questions

To address the problem outlined above, several research questions were formulated:

1. What proportion of the ABE and ASE students in the sample have a "favorable ratio" of the positive aspects of an ego-stage crisis over the negative aspects?

2. What proportion of the ABE and ASE students in the sample have high pertinent, low pertinent, or inconclusive pertinent concerns for "Trust," "Autonomy," "Initiative," and/or "Industry?"

3. a. What proportion of the ABE and ASE students in the sample believes that the educational experiences in ABE and ASE programs greatly influenced them to become more positive in respect to their psychosocial concerns for trust, autonomy, initiative, and/or industry? What proportion believes this influence has been minimal? What proportion believes this influence helped some, but, not greatly?

   b. What proportion of the ABE and ASE students in the sample believes that the educational experiences in ABE and ASE programs greatly influenced them to become more negative in respect to their psychosocial concerns for trust, autonomy, initiative, and/or industry? What proportion believes this influence has been minimal? What proportion believes this influence helped some, but, not greatly?

Background

ABE and ASE programs were mandated by the federal government to provide illiterate and functional illiterate adults a means to acquire and upgrade their literacy skills. These program areas are in their infancy in terms of being academic programs of study, and are still developing in their abilities to facilitate the learning needs of the students who enroll in ABE and ASE classes. Since these program areas are young, in terms of their history, they lack a foundation that is built on carefully designed research studies that focus on the specific problems of the field. For example, many teachers who teach ABE and ASE students have relied on the literature that describes the "disadvantaged" adult (Anderson and Niemi, 1969) to get an idea of the types of students they should expect in their classes. This type of situation has prompted other authors (Kavale and Lindsey, 1977) to call for more research on problems that are specific to ABE and ASE programs.

In the ABE and/or ASE program, the teaching/learning environment, that is, the transactions between teachers and students and among students, becomes a crucial element in the student's choice to remain in the program (Kavale and Lindsey, 1977; Mezirow et al., 1975). Therefore, to be effective in offering programs that facilitate the needs of ABE and ASE students, the teachers of these students should have a thorough knowledge of the characteristics

of the students enrolling in their classes, the psychosocial concerns of those students, and the extent to which the educational environment affects psychosocial concerns.

The literature concerning the psychological and sociological characteristics of students indicated that many have negative characteristics. This literature also indicated that teachers tend to establish classroom environments that respond to such negative characteristics (Mezirow et al., 1975; Kreitlow, 1972). That is, teachers tend to place a high priority on establishing friendly, trusting relationships with students.

The literature on the current problems and concerns of ABE and ASE teachers indicated that the high rates of absenteeism and the dropout rate are major areas of concern (Mezirow et al., 1975). Other authors have argued that teachers should be more sensitive to the peculiar needs and characteristics of adults as learners (Hand, 1968) and that teachers need to understand the students in their own sub-cultures (Kreitlow, 1965). These authors argued further that more specific research is needed to investigate the characteristics and concerns of these students.

The review of the background literature indicates that many of the studies that identified psychological and sociological characteristics of ABE and ASE students were not grounded in any theoretical framework. Therefore, the terms and concepts they used to describe these students are questionable in terms of their meaning and applicability, i.e., certain terms have theoretically based

meanings and tend to change with the theory, e.g., the term "self-concept." Also, most of these studies have attempted to explain the psychosocial characteristics of ABE and ASE students by drawing inferences from an examination of the students' environmental surroundings (Anderson and Niemi, 1969). These authors implied that there is a close relationship between the individual's environmental surroundings and his/her amount of ego strength. For example, Anderson and Niemi (1969) argued that because a great number of disadvantaged people are dependent on public assistance, they can be characterized by their lack of self-confidence and their development of dependency attitudes. The methodology of these studies appeared to lack an in-depth focus on the specific psychosocial characteristics and concerns of students.

The present study employed a methodology which provided for a tighter research design than those studies reviewed in the literature. It employed the theoretical framework of a depth psychology, in investigating the psychosocial characteristics of ABE/ASE students. More specifically, this study employed the ego stage model developed by Erik Erikson (1963) to identify and describe the psychosocial characteristics of students. Erikson's model provided an in-depth, theoretically grounded approach to the study of the problem and also provided a basis for consistency in analyzing and interpreting the results. This model described human development in terms of eight ego stages in which the individual, through his/her ego, must

confront inner and outer conflicts. It provided a theoretical basis from which to investigate the subject within his/her environment and the manner in which the environment has influenced the development of the ego.

This study operationalized the theoretical constructs of Erikson's model through the use of attitude scales. These attitude scales were used to gather information on students' psychosocial characteristics and concerns in an objective and systematic manner. This approach allowed the researcher to gather similar information, in a consistent manner, from all the subjects in the sample. It also gave the researcher tighter control over the sampling process, encouraged a larger sample, and provided a more reliable basis of consistency in analyzing the data than the other studies cited in the literature.

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on Psychoanalytic theory. It was concerned with the application of ego psychology to provide descriptions of the psychosocial characteristics of ABE/ASE students. Boyd (1964) suggested that there are two strong characteristics of ego psychology which made it suitable for a study of this nature: a) ego psychology describes human behavior in developmental terms; and b) the developmental terms and concepts employed in ego psychology are rooted in the principle of transactions between the growing organism and the changing environment. Ego psychology strives to

discover the integrative and disruptive forces acting within and on the human organism as it attempts to handle problems arising from various fields of operation. The model developed by Erik Erikson (1963) represents the specific theoretical formulation, within the area of ego psychology, that was employed in this study.

Erikson's Theory

The model described in Erikson's theory provides a description of human psychosocial development. He postulated that people progress through eight ego stages in which they must confront inner and outer conflicts. Each successive stage brings the individual into more complex activities and interpersonal relationships. He postulated further that each stage follows an "epigenetic" pattern, having its special time of ascendancy, in which the individual, through the functions of his/her ego, must resolve a binary conflict or crisis, the solution of which will significantly affect the ego's future development.

Erikson also noted that in normal, healthy development of the ego there is not a sharp polarity to the solution of a crisis. A positive solution to a crisis, e.g., trust as opposed to mistrust, is also composed of a certain residue of the negative. Also, each crisis exists as an active dimension of the ego as new crisis are met. Erikson explained his use of the term "crisis" when he said,

> Crisis is used here in a developmental sense to connote not a threat of catastrophe, but a turning point, a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential, and therefore, the otogenetic source of generational strength and maladjustment. (Erikson, 1968, p. 96)

In this sense, the direction in which an individual resolves each crisis determines how the individual's personality can be characterized, e.g., an individual who resolved the first stage positively can be characterized as a "trusting" person.

The work of Robert Boyd (1961, 1964, and 1970) added an additional dimension to the "phase-specific" concept mentioned above. He has argued that individuals who have resolved phase-specific crises may have "pertinent" concerns for these stages at a later point in their lives. He has found that as individuals encounter phase-specific concerns, they have pertinent concerns for those stages they already resolved. He has also found that those individuals who have pertinent concerns, at particular points in their lives, wish to change their concept of themselves in respect to the stage in question. For example, an individual may have phase-specific concerns for the stage of "Intimacy vs. Isolation," but finds it difficult to positively resolve this stage because of excessive negative residue in the stage of "Trust vs. Mistrust." Therefore, the individual could have a "pertinent" concern to become more trusting.

The first four stages of this model provide the essential ingredients for the development of an adult personality. The strength or the firmness of an individual's sense of identity will

be determined, in large part, by how well he/she has resolved these ego stages. In accordance with the theory, adults may have "phase-specific" concerns for the stages of "Identity vs. Role Confusion," "Intimacy vs. Isolation," "Generativity vs. Stagnation," or "Integrity vs. Disgust/Despair." However, they may have "pertinent" concerns for any of the first four stages with which they are not content. In this sense, the future development of an adult's personality is also significantly influenced by the resolution of the first four stages and their degree of pertinency.

Methodology

Boyd (1974) argued that many of the assumptions and self-perceptions we hold as human beings are held at bay in the unconscious realm of the mind. These unconscious thoughts and ideas also influence our interrelationships with other people and our intrarelationships to ourselves. Boyd provided a more complete explanation of the relationship of the unconscious to the self when he said,

> I see the unconscious as standing for that cluster of unexamined assumptions which within their own context attempt to structure transactions. These unexamined assumptions remain so as to share in one way or another a basic proposition -- that an open examination of the assumption would destroy some aspect of the individual's life-view and the maintenance of this life-view is crucial to survival. The conscious is observable in the individual's open examination of assumptions which serve as the basis for his decision-making. (Robert Boyd, 1974, p. 11)

Therefore, this research examined those assumptions made by ABE/ASE students, in their everyday functioning, which underlie their decision-making processes. This objective was accomplished through the use of self-report instruments. Boyd stated that,

> The responses on the self-report instrument are a descriptive configuration of the individual within the ego-stage theoretical framework. This is how the individual views himself. In a manner of speaking these responses give us a self-portrait. (Boyd, 1974, p. 25)

In this study the student's responses to statements about him/herself concerning interrelationships and intrarelationships provided a "self-portrait" of ABE/ASE students.

Instrumentation

The Self-Description Questionnaire

The instrument used was developed by Robert Boyd and subsequently tested for reliability by Boyd and Koskela (1970). It was designed to gather information on an individual's perception of his/her behavior patterns. The original instrument was composed of 160 items and each item was constructed to have a positive or negative valence to the solution of a given ego crisis. Each item was located in one of five fields: physical, societal, interpersonal, familial, or self. Boyd (1970) argued that these fields represent the scope of an individual's transactional relationships with his/herself, the surrounding environment and his/her relationships with other people. He justified the

inclusion of these fields as essential to the construction of the instrument when he said, "Every test item on a personality instrument has a content, a valence, and a location field" (p. 4).

This instrument also employed a pertinency scale to gather data on the level of concern a particular item has for a given subject, and a like-unlike scale to determine the extent to which the subject identified with the statement on the questionnaire. Therefore the individual taking this instrument could make four possible responses:

1) a statement may have been like the subject and held a high concern for him/her;

2) a statement may have been unlike the subject and held little or no concern for him/her;

3) a statement may have been like the subject, but, held little or no concern for him/her;

4) a statement may have been unlike the subject, but held a high concern for him/her.

Both scales had a range of 6 possible responses by each subject.

The content validity of this instrument was established by Boyd and Colley in 1966. Boyd and Koskela (1970) established the Self-Description Questionnaire as possessing high internal consistency, reliability and stability measures. Boyd (1970) concluded,

> It would appear, based on these results, that the Self-Description Questionnaire possesses sufficient reliability and validity to warrant further research and to be employed experimentally as an instrument to study ego-stage development among adult populations. (p. 13)

This instrument has also been used by other researchers (White, 1976 and Borger, 1969, and others) who have found it to be an effective measure of ego-stage resolutions and pertinent concerns.

Because of the nature of the sample and practical constraints, such as a sample composed of functional illiterates and low literates, and time limitations, a shorter form of the Self-Description Questionnaire was employed in this study. Boyd (1974) indicated that the use of the short form is applicable in small groups, such as classes, when he said,

> Neither the Self-Description Q-sort nor the Self-Description Questionnaire could be used in their existing format to provide the kind of data that was required to establish congruency. It was necessary to have some reading on what an individual was willing to give to other group members and what he wanted from them. It was possible to restructure the existing items in order to have them read in the manner to fit the requirements... Three of the five fields were dropped, physical, society and family, and the remaining two fields, people and self, were retained. (Boyd, 1974, p. 53)

Boyd argued further that this form has two advantages: 1) it focuses on the two fields which are clearly the most central aspects of small groups; and 2) the form is much shorter, i.e., 64 items, and therefore would be a real advantage in terms of the amount of time needed for administration.

Although the items on this instrument were non-technical in language construction and accommodated middle-class language usage, a problem was anticipated in using it with a low-literate population. This problem was controlled for by: 1) revising the language of the questionnaire to be more readable to a low-literate

population; 2) placing the revised instrument on audio tape to be administered via taped recording; and 3) pretesting the instrument with a group of ABE/ASE students to assess its effectiveness, clarity and applicability to such a population. The results of the pre-test are discussed later in this paper.

In summary, the Self-Description Questionnaire was employed in this study to provide a "self-portrait" of ABE/ASE students' perceptions of their psychosocial characteristics. Such a self-portrait provided information on the student's conscious and unconscious perceptions of him/herself. It also provided a basis for drawing generalizations about these students' characteristics and those concerns they consider to be pertinent at this point in their lives.

The Educational Experience Questionnaire

This instrument was developed in the form of an attitude scale to assess students' beliefs and behaviors concerning the extent to which their psychosocial concerns for trust, autonomy, initiative, and/or industry were facilitated through the educational environment of ABE and ASE classes.

This instrument was also designed to assess the affect that returning to an educational setting has made on the personality of ABE and ASE students. Each statement began with the phrase "Since being in school again.." and was designed to focus the

subject's attention on two aspects of personality development as they related to the experiences he/she had encountered in the ABE/ASE class or program. These two aspects were: a) the first four stages of Erikson's model; and b) the interpersonal field and self-field as defined by Boyd (1970). Therefore, each statement that the subject responded to should have indicated a positive or negative solution of one of the first four stages located in Erikson's model; been located in either the field of interpersonal relationships or self; and indicated progress or retrogress in relation to the stages in Erikson's model which resulted from their experiences in the program. The scoring for this instrument was done on a six point, like - unlike scale.

The content and construct validity was established by asking a panel of five graduate students and two ABE/ASE teachers to assess a pool of 120 potential items. They were asked to comment on each statement's clarity and language usage. After evaluating the responses from these individuals a group discussion was held to clarify conflicting points of view.

Based upon the input of these persons, the statements were revised. A panel of three judges, consisting of three professors, was then asked to rank the statements in terms of their applicability to measure the variables under study. From these rankings and feedback 48 statements were selected to form the final instrument. To control for the interreliability of the judging procedure,

each statement was placed on the front of index cards. The stage and valence of Erikson's model, the field, and the weight for each statement was placed on the back of the cards. Two experts in this field of study were asked to judge the content and construct validity of each statement. Those statements not receiving 100 percent agreement between the two judges and the researcher were revised and the procedure described above was repeated. The final instrument, consisting of 48 statements, was composed of only those statements receiving 100 percent agreement. The reliability of the instrument is discussed later in this paper.

In summary, the Educational Experience Questionnaire was developed to provide information on the extent to which ABE and ASE students believe that the educational programs in which they were enrolled helped them to deal with their concerns for trust, autonomy, initiative, and/or industry in a positive or negative manner. The statements of the instrument were phrased in a manner that would require the subject to reflect on the extent to which the educational environment has influenced him/her to change in respect to these concerns.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the two instruments used in this study and to test the applicability of the instruments to a population of ABE/ASE students. A sample

of 30 students volunteered to participate in the pilot study. These students were currently attending classes in two programs located in Madison, Wisconsin. They ranged in age from 16 to 48, and represented a variety of racial groups, e.g., Black Americans, White Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, etc. This group appeared to be representative of the ABE/ASE student population for the bulk of the programs located in Southern Wisconsin. Only those students attending ABE or ASE classes were included in the pilot study sample. Students enrolled in other programs, such as English as a Second Language, were excluded.

The instruments were administered in a group format when possible. On two occasions the instruments were administered to individual students. Each administration took 45 minutes to one hour, and followed the same format: a) an explanation of the purpose of the research; b) a demonstration of how to score the answer sheets; c) a promise to make the results available to the participants; and d) the administration of the instruments. All tests were administered by this researcher.

Reliability of the Instruments

To test the internal consistency of the two instruments, an analysis of variance, item analysis technique was applied to the data. Frank Baker (1965) has argued that the

> Item parameters estimated by such techniques provide a powerful conceptual basis for describing item characteristics that is meaningful to both the test constructor and the psychometrician. (p. 167)

The reliability coefficients computed using this technique were all very high. The R for the like-unlike scale of the "Self-Description Questionnaire" was .93, for the pertinency scale .97, and for the Educational Experience Questionnaire .93.

Since few problems were encountered by using these instruments with ABE/ASE students, and since they were estimated to be highly reliable, the decision was made to proceed with the study. The only change in administration occurred to help students understand the scoring of the instruments. The terms like-unlike were reversed to coincide with the way the instruments were scored.

Sample

The sample for this study was drawn from two vocational technical districts in the state of Wisconsin. The researcher visited five programs in these districts and solicited volunteers to participate in the study. A total of 42 students participated. The composition of the students in this sample was similar to those students in the pilot study in terms of their ages, race, length of time in the program and general background. However, the age range was from 16 to 70. To increase the size of the sample, the decision was made to combine the pilot study sample with the sample for the major study. This decision was made because: a) the difficulty of getting ABE/ASE students to

participate in a study of this nature, b) the time and expense involved in further testing, c) the fact that no significant changes occurred in the test administration procedures, and d) the two samples possess similar demographic characteristics. Therefore, a total of 72 students participated in this study.

Findings and Analysis of Data

This section discusses the findings of this research and the analysis of data. The findings are presented in tables to provide a quick summary of the descriptive form of the data. Each table is discussed by a brief capsule analysis. The purpose of each analysis is to discuss the important points of the data presented in the tables.

Table 1

The percentage of ABE/ASE Students Who Resolved the Eight Ego-Stages Positively, Negatively, or Inconclusively and the Range of Scores for Each Stage

Ego Stages	Percentages			Range[b]
	Positive	Negative	Inconclusive[a]	
Trust	30.56	55.56	13.89	-15 to +11
Autonomy	55.56	27.78	16.67	- 9 to +10
Initiative	37.50	56.94	5.56	-11 to +16
Industry	65.28	23.61	11.11	-11 to + 9
Identity	51.39	38.89	9.72	- 9 to +18
Intimacy	69.44	27.78	2.78	- 7 to +13
Generativity	76.39	16.67	6.94	- 6 to +14
Integrity	47.22	44.44	8.33	-19 to +14

Note: N = 72

a. The proportion under this category was too close to the mean to called positive or negative

b. The theoretical range was from -20 to +20

Table 1 describes the psychosocial characteristics of the ABE/ASE students in the sample by presenting the percentages of students who had positive, negative, and inconclusive ego-stage resolutions for all eight stages and the range of scores for each stage. These data show that a larger percentage of the students had positive ego stage resolutions for the stages of autonomy, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity and integrity. A larger percentage of these students had negative ego-stage resolutions for the stages of trust and initiative. The largest percentage of negative resolutions was in the stage of initiative and the smallest percentage of negative resolutions was in the stage of generativity. More students resolved the stage of generativity positively and fewer students resolved the stage of trust positively.

The inconclusive category in Table 1 indicates the ego stages about which the students in the sample were more or less ambivalent. The data in the table shows that the students were more ambivalent about their ego-stage resolutions of the stage of autonomy and least ambivalent about their ego-stage resolutions of the stage of intimacy.

The range of scores indicates the ego stages in which individual students scored most negatively or most positively. The lowest possible score for a particular stage was -20 and the highest possible score was +20. In reading the table it can be seen that at least one student scored almost at the limit of the

scale in the ego stage of negative integrity. Also, one student scored near the limit of the scale in the ego stage of positive identity.

Table 2

The percentage of ABE/ASE students Who had High Pertinent, Low Pertinent, or Inconclusive Pertinent Concerns for the First Four Ego Stages and the Range of Scores for Each Stage

	Percentages			
Ego Stages	High Pertinency	Low Pertinency	Inconclusive Pertinency	Range[a]
Trust	52.78	31.94	15.28	9 to 47
Autonomy	40.28	50.00	9.72	9 to 46
Initiative	34.72	51.39	13.89	10 to 44
Industry	45.83	40.06	11.11	8 to 46

Note: $\underline{N} = 72$
$\overline{X} = 28$

a. The theoretical range was from 8 to 48

The data in Table 2 describe the percentage of high, low and inconclusive pertinent concerns of the students in the sample for the first four stages, and the range of scores for each stage. These data show that a larger percentage of these students had high pertinent concerns for the stages of trust and industry and low pertinent concerns for the stages of autonomy and initiative. The percentages in the inconclusive category indicate these students were least ambivalent about their pertinent concerns for trust. The range of scores show that at least one student in the sample had an extremely low pertinent concern which was in the stage of industry and one student had an extremely high pertinent concern in the stage of trust.

Table 3

ABE/ASE Students' Rating of the Positive Educational Influence on the First Four Ego Stages as Being Minimal, Intermediate, or Great

Ego Stages	Percentages		
	Minimal	Intermediate	Great
Trust	6.94	56.94	36.11
Autonomy	2.78	56.94	40.28
Initiative	6.94	73.61	19.44
Industry	11.11	48.61	40.28

Note: N = 72

The data in Table 3 describe the degree - minimal, intermediate, or great - to which the students in the sample perceived that their educational experiences had a positive influence on their self-images in respect to the first four ego stages. These data show that the most positive educational influence was on developing autonomy. More students rated the influence on autonomy as being great and a small percentage of these students rated the influence on this stage to be minimal. The data in Table 3 also show that the least positive educational influence was on developing initiative. A small percentage of the students rated the influence on initiative to be great and a very large percentage rated it to be intermediate. The students rated the positive educational influence on trust and industry as being less than the influence on autonomy but higher than the influence on initiative. The overall positive educational influence was intermediate or great on all four ego stages.

Table 4

ABE/ASE Students' Rating of the Negative Educational Influence on the First Four Ego Stages as Being Minimal, Intermediate, or Great

Ego Stages	Percentages		
	Minimal	Intermediate	Great
Trust	43.06	48.61	8.33
Autonomy	40.28	51.39	8.33
Initiative	36.11	59.72	4.17
Industry	50.00	43.06	6.94

Note: N = 72

Table 4 presents data that describe the degree - minimal, intermediate, or great - to which the students in the sample perceived that their educational experiences had a negative influence on their self-images in respect to the first four ego stages. The data in the table show that the most negative educational influence was on developing initiative. Fewer students rated negative initiative as having a minimal influence and the largest percentage of students rated negative initiative to be in the intermediate category. The least negative educational influence was developing industry. The largest percentage of students rated the negative influence on industry to be minimal and a very small percentage rated this influence to be great. The students rated the negative educational influence on trust and autonomy to be less than the negative influence on initiative, but more than the negative influence on industry. The overall negative educational influence was intermediate or minimal on all four ego stages.

Conclusion

The results of the study permit several conclusions to be drawn about the psychosocial characteristics of ABE/ASE students and the perceptions these students had of the effects of their educational experiences on trust, autonomy, initiative and industry. Because of the limitations in the sampling procedure, the conclusions should be valid only for the students and programs that participated in the study. For other ABE/ASE students and programs these conclusions are only suggestive.

In view of the major findings from the entire sample, several observations can be made: 1) the findings of this research question the conclusions of the authors cited in the background literature (Anderson and Niemi, 1969; Kavale and Lindsey, 1977) who describe ABE/ASE students as having a self-concept of dependency and lacking a positive sense of industry; and 2) the findings of this research indicate support for the conclusions of the authors in the literature (Anderson and Niemi, 1969; Hastings, 1968) who describe ABE/ASE students as being mistrusting and lacking a positive sense of initiative.

A positive sense of trust was defined in this study as an essential trustfulness of others as well as a fundamental sense on one's own trustworthiness. A sense of positive trust was considered necessary to develop one's capacity for faith and hope. A sense of mistrust was described as resulting from a combination

of impressions of having been deprived, divided and abandoned. The proportion of mistrusting students in the sample was greater than the proportion of trusting students. Therefore, there is some justification to suggest that most of the students enrolled in ABE/ASE programs view themselves as being mistrusting. These findings add some additional support to the conclusions drawn by Anderson and Niemi (1969), and Hastings (1968), who described the disadvantaged adult, i.e., ABE/ASE students and/or potential students, as being mistrusting.

The proportion of students in the sample who had high pertinent concerns for trust was greater than the proportion who had low pertinent concerns for trust. Therefore, there is some justification to suggest that the ABE/ASE students who view themselves as being mistrusting have a tendency to want to change that view of themselves, i.e., to become more trusting or less trusting. Based upon my transactions with ABE/ASE students, I believe that a majority of the students who desire to change their self-images, in respect to trust, want to become more trusting. My arguments suggest that a majority of ABE/ASE students want to overcome the deep seated feelings they have of being deprived, divided and abandoned, and develop more their capacities for faith in themselves and other people.

Anderson and Niemi (1969), and Kavale and Lindsey (1977), described disadvantaged adults and/or ABE/ASE students as having a self-concept of dependency. Conversely, the findings of this

study indicate that the proportion of ABE/ASE students who see themselves as having a sense of positive autonomy is greater than the proportion who see themselves as having a sense of shame and doubt. The findings also pointed in the direction that indicates students who have a sense of positive autonomy have a tendency to be satisfied with that self-image. These findings might be explained by reviewing the current trends in the greater society that might influence these students' self-images. There currently exists in the general society, a tendency for males to project a masculine image and to think and feel that they are "masters of their fate" and "molders of their destinies." Also, the general society is currently undergoing social change where females are being encouraged to enter new lines of occupations and to perceive of themselves as being "independent" women. Therefore, the researcher believes that the social/cultural influence on the self-perceptions of ABE/ASE students is probably one of the major reasons why these students view themselves as being autonomous.

In this research, a sense of positive initiative suggested that an individual enjoyed competition, insisted on goals and derived pleasure from conquest. In short, positive initiative was described as a basis for a realistic sense of ambition and purpose. Anderson and Niemi (1969), and Hastings (1968), argued that disadvantaged students and/or ABE/ASE students had a negative sense of initiative. The findings of this study also pointed in the direction that indicates most of the students attending ABE/ASE

programs view themselves as having a sense of negative initiative. Therefore, the findings indicate most ABE/ASE students have a tendency to view themselves as having an excessive amount of guilt. Individuals who have an excessive amount of guilt are often radically divided within themselves by the inner voice of "self-observation," "self-guidance," and "self-punishment." The conscience of these individuals tends to "slow down" or to largely "immobilize" their aggressive and intrusive energies. The individual is thus resigned to meek compliance rather than to having a sense of ambition or a desire to pursue realistic goals.

The findings of this study also pointed in the direction that indicates the ABE/ASE students who view themselves as having a sense of negative initiative have a tendency to be satisfied with that self-image. The low pertinent concerns that ABE/ASE students tend to have for positive initiative might also be explained - in addition to having interpsychic conflicts - by looking at the trends in the general society's attitude about aggression and competition. There is currently a movement in the general society to lower the level of competition encouraged in schools and to suppress the aggressive energies of most individuals. To be aggressive and competitive is viewed as being selfish and inconsiderate. Being aggressive suggest to most people the idea of being single-minded in achieving one's own goals while being inconsiderate of the goals of others. To be competitive is viewed as being interested only in winning and of being inconsiderate of the person who loses. Therefore, the

self-perceptions of ABE/ASE students as lacking a positive sense of initiative and being satisfied with that self-image may be a reflection of their understanding of how the general society wants them to act.

Anderson and Niemi, (1969) and Kavale and Lindsey, (1977) concluded that disadvantaged adults and/or ABE/ASE students lacked a positive sense of industry. Conversely, the findings of this study point in the direction that indicates ABE/ASE students tend to view themselves as having a sense of positive industry. That is, they tend to earn recognition by producing things; they can become an eager and absorbed unit of a productive situation; and they tend to share in constructing and planning activities. The findings also indicate ABE/ASE students who have a positive sense of industry have a tendency to want to change their self images to become more or less industrious. Since most ABE/ASE students enroll in programs for job related reasons, e.g., the work experience program, the researcher believes that most students want to view themselves as being more industrious. The high pertinent concern most ABE/ASE tend to have for the stage of industry might be explained by the fact that they enrolled in the programs for job related reasons. Their heightened concern and anticipation over job related matters would probably be reflected as a high pertinent concern for the stage of industry.

A large proportion of ABE/ASE students in the sample rated the positive educational influence on the first four ego stages to

be minimal or intermediate and a small proportion rated it to be great. Therefore, it appears that the educational programs in which ABE/ASE students are enrolled generally do a good job in promoting the positive psychosocial development of their students and controlling the negative influences that could hinder psychosocial development. The programs are doing a better job of promoting the development of positive autonomy than they are of promoting positive initiative. This finding might be explained by looking at the autonomous nature of ABE/ASE students. ABE/ASE students tend to view themselves as having a sense of positive autonomy. The programs that enroll these students undoubtedly have policies that observe the autonomous nature of the students and encourage students to make many of their own decisions.

Another finding of this research indicates that ABE/ASE programs are not doing as good a job of encouraging positive initiative, or of discouraging the educational influence on negative initiative, as they are for the other three ego stages considered in the study. This finding might be explained by the fact that many ABE/ASE teachers tend to discourage positive initiative. That is, ABE/ASE teachers tend to discourage the aggressive behavior of students and the competition between students that could be used to build positive initiative.

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